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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FOR PRM/A, PRM/AFR, PRM/ANE, PRM/MCE, NEA/ELA, AND AF
GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SUDAN REFUGEES: UNHCR MEETS DEADLINE, BUT
OVERWHELMED WITH NEW REGISTRANTS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

Reference: Cairo 268
Cairo 170
Cairo 132
Cairo 58

Summary

1. (SBU) UNHCR has completed its evaluation of the 183 Sudanese asylum seekers still in detention since they were forcibly evicted from a sit-in in a downtown park last December 30 and will present its final report to the GOE tonight. Since it reopened its offices, UNHCR has been overwhelmed with asylum seekers - many of them hostile - seeking to register or to replace lost documents. UNHCR will tell the GOE that it has concluded that approximately 15 of the detainees have valid refugee claims. In addition it will say that about 20 of those denied have the right to appeal and UNHCR will ask for another day or two to conduct these appeals. UNHCR will also ask that none of the detainees be deported on humanitarian grounds. UNHCR has investigated the number of fatalities during the December 30 incident and has found no evidence to suggest that more than 27 were killed. MFA has advised UNHCR that the GOE will conduct an investigation of the incident. End Summary

UNHCR will Meet its Deadline But Overwhelmed by Newcomers

2 (SBU) UNHCR Cairo's Deputy Representative, Damtew Dessalegne briefed RefCoord January 26 about the status of the 183 Sudanese asylum seekers still in detention following the violent eviction of 2,100 asylum seekers from Mustafa Mahmoud Park last December 30 following a 14-week sit-in. UNHCR had been given a deadline of today to carry out Refugee Status Determinations (RSDs) of these individuals - all males. Dessalegne reported that since it reopened its office (which had been closed during the demonstration leading up to the December 30 incident) it has been overwhelmed with up to 800 asylum seekers every day seeking to register as new arrivals or applying for replacement documents for those lost during the sit-in. Many of the Sudanese coming to UNHCR are angry and hostile.

Only a Few Have Valid Claims - UNHCR Needs Time for Appeals

13. (SBU) Dessalegne reported that UNHCR has completed its evaluation of all of the detainees and is now analyzing its findings, which it will convey to the GOE later tonight. Of the 183 cases reviewed, 130 were "closed files" - those who had been evaluated and denied some time ago, and about 50 were asylums seekers who had not previously registered with UNHCR. UNHCR will report to the GOE that among the first group of old cases it found about four who have valid refugee claims based on new evidence presented to UNHCR caseworkers in the last few weeks. Among the second group of new cases (not previously registered) UNHCR found 10-12 valid claims. Approximately 40 new claims were denied but have the right to appeal the UNHCR decision. Dessalegne says UNHCR will ask the GOE for more time (a day or two) to conduct these appeals.

14. (SBU) UNHCR will also request that none of those currently in detention be deported on humanitarian grounds - because of the trauma suffered following the police action on December 30 and the subsequent detention. Comment: Since the incident, the GOE has been flexible regarding deadlines and will probably give UNHCR the additional time it needs to hear appeals. However, UNHCR's request that no detainees be deported is a different matter, and it is difficult to say how the GOE will respond. End comment.

No Evidence of Additional Fatalities

15. (SBU). UNHCR has investigated the number of fatalities during the December 30 incident and has found no evidence to suggest that more than 27 were killed. MFA has advised UNHCR that the GOE will conduct an investigation of the incident.

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